

Message Text

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ACTION AID-05

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 ISO-00 IGA-01 /013 W
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R 291644Z OCT 75
FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7738
INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 1638

PASS AID/W, ALSO AF/W; ABIDJAN FOR REDSO; NIAMEY FOR RDO

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAID

SUBJ: RISKS IMPLICIT IN INITIATING AID STUDY PROJECTS INVOLVING
CONTACT WITH DAHOMEAN GOVERNMENT WITHOUT EMBASSY'S KNOWLEDGE

1. MR MERRITT SARGENT, AGRICULTURAL ECONOMIST AT MICHIGAN STATE UNIV, APPEARED AT EMBASSY OCT 28 WITH AID TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CONTRACT TO EXPLORE POSSIBILITY OF RESEARCH PROJECT ON SUCCESS OF ANIMAL TRACTION PROGRAM IN NORTHERN DAHOMEY (AID PROJECT NO 625-11 935907 SIGNED 10/16/75). ACCORDING TO SARGENT AID/W (AFR/CWR) WAS TO SEEK OUR APPROVAL OF PROJECT AND ADVISE US OF HIS VISIT. WE HAVE NO RECORD THIS WAS DONE. SARGENT OF COURSE UNAWARE OF WHAT HAS BEEN HAPPENING IN THIS COUNTRY. HE SAID HE HAD BEEN IN CONTACT BY MAIL WITH DAHOMEAN AGRICULTURAL OFFICIALS PRIOR TO HIS ARRIVAL HERE.

2. AS RESULT SEVERAL UNPLEASANT RECENT EXPERIENCES WITH VISITORS NOT ANNOUNCED OR NOT INTRODUCED WITH CARE, AND IN VIEW OF WORSENING POLITICAL CLIMATE, EMBASSY HAS HAD TO ESTABLISH PRACTICE OF A) INFORMING FOREIGN MINISTRY OF ARRIVAL OF USG-SPONSORED PERSONNEL WHO WISH TO CONTACT DAHOMEAN OFFICIALS OR TRAVEL EXTENSIVELY IN COUNTRY, AND B) INTRODUCING VISITORS PERSONALLY.

3. WITH DAHOMEY MOVING INTO THE "REVOLUTIONARY DICTATORSHIP" STATE (TO USE PRES KERKOU'S WORDS OF THREE DAYS AGO) AND
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POLICE SCARFING UP FOREIGNERS OF ALL KINDS, THE TYPE OF FREE

WHEELING REFLECTED IN THE SARGENT CASE RISKS UNNECESSARY MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND/OR INCIDENTS WHICH COULD PLACE FURTHER STRAINS IN US-DAHOMY RELATIONS. EVEN IF CONDITIONS WERE NOT SO TRICKY HERE, IT IS ONLY REASONABLE TO EXPECT AID TO CONSULT WITH THE EMBASSY ABOUT A PROJECT AND PROVIDE ADVANCE NOTIFICATION OF INTENTION TO COMMENCE CONTACTS WITH DAHOMEAN GOVT OFFICIALS.

4. AS EXPLAINED TO US BY SARGENT, HIS PROJECT HAS ALL SORTS OF POTENTIAL RAMIFICATIONS MERITING JUDGMENTS THAT CAN ONLY BE MADE BY THIS MISSION--E.G. JOINT RESEARCH WITH UNIV OF DAHOMEY AND MIN OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT, DESPATCH USG-FINANCED RESEARCH TO DAHOMEY FOR TWO-YEAR STAY, ETC.

5. INCONVENIENCE OF SARGENT'S VISIT AT THIS TIME IS ILLUSTRATED BY FACT THAT WE ARE IN TWO WEEK PERIOD WITHOUT ANY AID OFFICER OR ECON/COMM OFFICER. AS RESULT DCM IS HAVING TO TAKE OFF TIME FROM HIS OTHER DUTIES TO INTRODUCE HIM AND EXPLAIN WHAT HE IS DOING HERE.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS:

A. AID OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR ARRANGING SUCH CONTRACTS BE FAMILIARIZED WITH THE SITUATION HERE.

B. THE EMBASSY'S ADVICE BE SOUGHT PRIOR TO SIGNATURE.

C. CONTACTS WITH THE DAHOMEAN GOVT BE DELAYED UNTIL AFTER THE EMBASSY EXPRESSES ITS VIEWS.

D. ADVANCE NOTICE OF VISITS BE GIVEN, WITH AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE EMBASSY TO RECOMMEND OVERFLYING DAHOMEY OR ALTERNATE DATES.

7. WOULD APPRECIATE EXPLANATION.
ENGLE

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